Spoiling Inside and Out

Wendy Pearlman

Internal Political Contestation and the Middle East Peace Process

Of the thirty-eight peace accords signed between 1988 and 1998, thirty-one failed to last more than three years.[1] Contributing to their failure was the behavior of so-called spoilers: those who use violence or other means to undermine negotiations in the expectation that a settlement will threaten their power or interests.[2] The stakes for understanding spoiler behavior are high. Where parties kept spoilers at bay, such as in Guatemala and South Africa, years of bloody conflict gave way to successful transitions to peace and democracy. Where spoilers proved triumphant, such as in Angola and Rwanda, the violence ensuing after a peace accord failed was more horrific than what had preceded it.

Conventional explanations of conflict resolution assume that both negotiators and spoilers act primarily to achieve objectives vis-à-vis their external opponent. Politics internal to their national community are relevant only insofar as they increase or decrease audience costs, that is, the domestic price that political actors pay for their foreign policy decisions. This explanation, however, neglects the meaningful ways in which domestic politics are not only a constraint on actors' conflict strategies but a motivator as well. Actors turn to negotiating or spoiling to contest both what a proposed settlement entails and who has the power to decide this and other matters on behalf of their community. For competing factions in a nonstate group, in particular, participation in or spoiling of negotiations offers an opportunity to advance their struggle for political dominance.

This article develops a framework for understanding negotiating and spoiling as mechanisms of internal political contestation. It takes the notion of "nested games," which George Tsebelis uses to explain Western European electoral politics,[3] and applies it to the uniquely fluid context of nonstate groups.

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1. John Darby, *The Effects of Violence on Peace Processes* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001), p. 8.
2. Stephen John Stedman, "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Fall 1997), pp. 5–53.
3. George Tsebelis, *Nested Games: Rational Choice in Comparative Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

The article puts forth two hypotheses. First, negotiating and spoiling as internal contestation are more likely when at least one party to a conflict lacks an institutionalized system of legitimate representation. Second, whether internal contestation motivations lead factions to act as peace makers or peace breakers depends not only on their policy preferences but also on the balance of power within their community.

The article examines these hypotheses through a comparative analysis of two episodes in the history of the Palestinian national movement: the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO's) bid to join the Geneva peace conference in 1973–74 and its engagement in the Oslo peace process from 1993 to 2000. In both instances, the official Palestinian leadership sought to participate in negotiations while smaller factions carried out attacks to undermine them. Relying on external utility models, most commentators interpreted these actors' motivations as stemming exclusively from their stance in the conflict with Israel. An analysis of a range of primary and secondary sources, however, suggests that these actors were no less motivated by their struggle over representation of the Palestinian cause.

The article proceeds in four sections. The first section critiques dominant explanations of negotiating and spoiling, highlighting their insufficient attention to actors' internal political motivations. The second section presents the internal contestation model and derives the two hypotheses mentioned above. The third section illustrates the usefulness of this model through an examination of the Palestinian case. The final section discusses the implications of this research for theory building and for future policymaking with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict.
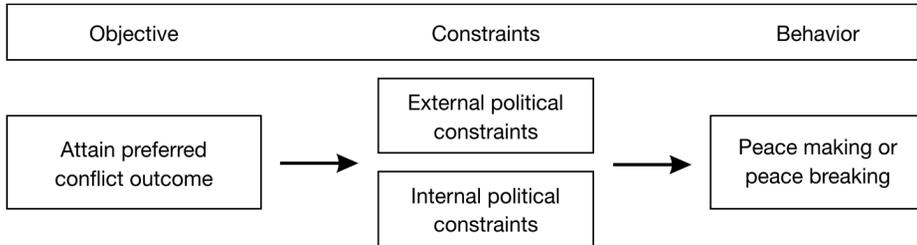
Insufficiency of External Utility Explanations

A peace process is a sustained effort to negotiate a lasting solution to a protracted conflict between states and/or nonstate groups.[4] This article focuses on the universe of peace negotiations involving a nonstate group, be it an ethnic, national, religious, ideological, or self-determination movement. Most explanations of peace making or peace breaking rely on external utility models because they assume that parties act to maximize gains vis-à-vis an external adversary. Figure 1 illustrates their underlying logic.

The literature on conflict resolution offers several variations on this model. The one-level external utility model holds that groups fight when they expect

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4. Boaz Atzili, "Peace Process," in William A. Darity, ed., *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (Detroit, Mich.: Macmillan, 2008), pp. 185–186.

Figure 1. External Utility Model

Objective	Constraints	Behavior

| Attain preferred conflict outcome | → | External political constraints | → | Peace making or peace breaking |
| | | Internal political constraints | | |

to achieve more by acting unilaterally and negotiate when they expect to achieve more by acting cooperatively.[5] Some scholars conceptualize the latter as an example of "ripeness," which ensues when fighting reaches a mutually "hurting stalemate" in which neither antagonist believes that it can prevail.[6] The weakness of this model is that it treats antagonists as unitary actors, and hence misses the influence of domestic politics on foreign policy decisionmaking. By contrast, another model holds that domestic audience costs condition the ability of leaders to pursue negotiations.[7] Yet this model also underestimates the relevance of domestic politics. It assumes that internal politics are only one of several constraints on actors' attempts to advance their ultimate objective, not a driving motivation that may supplant it.

A similar external utility logic underlies much of the literature on spoilers of peace processes. Stephen Stedman argues that actors not satisfied with the terms of an agreement will engage in spoiling behavior unless third parties suppress, accommodate, or co-opt them as appropriate to address these actors' total, limited, or greedy goals.[8] Yet in assuming that the relevant variation lies in how much spoilers want rather than what they want, Stedman misses important differences among the types of spoilers that he identifies. Shifting the focus from motivations to capabilities, Kelly Greenhill and Solomon Major as-

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5. Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960); James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization,* Vol. 49, No. 3 (Summer 1995), pp. 379–414; R. Harrison Wagner, "Bargaining and War," *American Journal of Political Science,* Vol. 44, No. 3 (July 2000), pp. 469–484; and Robert Powell, "Bargaining Theory and International Conflict," *Annual Review of Political Science,* Vol. 5 (June 2002), pp. 255–289.
6. I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).
7. Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization,* Vol. 42, No. 3 (Summer 1988), pp. 427–460; James D. Fearon "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes," *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 88, No. 3 (September 1994), pp. 577–592; and Stephen John Stedman, *Peacemaking in Civil War: International Mediation in Zimbabwe, 1974–1980* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1991).
8. Stedman, "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes."

sert that spoilers emerge when shifts in the distribution of power in a conflict generate political opportunities.[9] Power imbalances, however, do more than restrain or liberate would-be spoilers. They also shape their incentives for acting as spoilers in the first place.

Research on spoilers' strategic calculations likewise focuses overwhelmingly on actors' external conflict goals. Robert Pape claims that groups use violence because it is more effective than negotiations in compelling democracies to yield territory.[10] Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter argue that spoilers design attacks to undermine the state's trust that its interlocutor on the other side will fulfill its obligations.[11] Rui de Figueiredo and Barry Weingast contend that extremists use terror against the state to provoke reprisals that will radicalize moderates within their own community, thereby wrecking the chances for an agreement.[12] These scholars derive hypotheses on the timing and character of violence from the assumption that spoilers' objective is to pressure their external adversary. They do not consider that spoilers might instead be aiming to coerce rivals within their own community.

In assuming that the aim of negotiators and spoilers is either peace or continued conflict, these external utility models disregard how most spoilers also act on internal political imperatives. In most nonstate groups, the struggle for external utility intersects with the struggle for internal power. Tsebelis suggests that these arenas of external and internal contestation constitute "nested games." The following analytical framework considers the implications of Tsebelis's approach in weakly institutionalized settings. In the absence of laws to enforce procedures for collective decisionmaking, not only are there multiple games of social choice, but their rules are in flux. And where allegiances are flexible and influence is fungible, actors are likely to act in one sphere of politics to extract benefits in another.

The Internal Contestation Model

In the internal contestation model, some of the negotiating or spoiling that is supposedly intended to alter the course of a conflict is actually designed to

9. Kelly M. Greenhill and Solomon Major, "The Perils of Profiling: Civil War Spoilers and the Collapse of Intrastate Peace Accords," *International Security,* Vol. 31, No. 3 (Winter 2006/07), pp. 7–40.
10. Robert A. Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 97, No. 3 (August 2003), pp. 343–361.
11. Andrew H. Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, "Sabotaging the Peace: The Politics of Extremist Violence," *International Organizations,* Vol. 56, No. 2 (Spring 2002), pp. 263–296.
12. Rui de Figueiredo Jr. and Barry R. Weingast, "Vicious Cycles: Endogenous Political Extremism and Political Violence," unpublished manuscript, University of California, Berkeley, October 2001.

Figure 2. Overlapping Realms of Contestation Producing Peace Making and Peace
Breaking as Internal Contestation
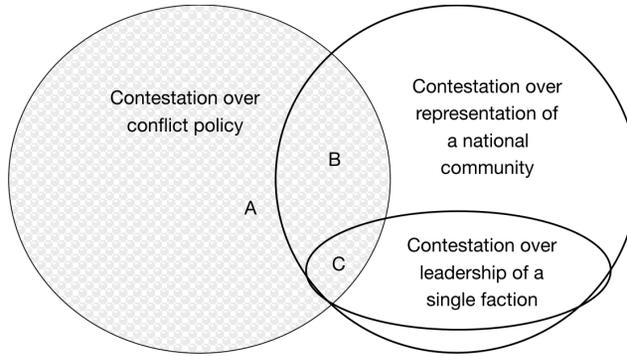
contest leadership over and representation of a single national community.
This kind of negotiating and spoiling emerges because nonstate entities tend to
encompass numerous factions vying for power.[13] Within each faction, elites
and aspirants often compete for leadership. These actors therefore strive for
organizational, personal, or political advantage both vis-à-vis their ethno-
national group's external adversary and vis-à-vis each other. Because these
arenas of struggle are simultaneous and overlapping, political action in one
arena can produce political influence in another (see figure 2).

The shaded circle in figure 2 represents the sum of negotiations or violent ac-
tivity designed to influence the course of a conflict. In area A, groups make
peace or thwart it depending on the gains that they expect each strategy to
yield vis-à-vis their external adversary. Conventional external utility explana-
tions view conflict behavior through this lens. In area B, actors' behavior vis-à-
vis their external opponent overlaps with their interests vis-à-vis rival factions
within their nonstate group. This is the category of behavior that the internal
contestation model seeks to elucidate. Area C marks a subset of this category,
in which actors are driven by their struggle for leadership within a single one
of the factions that make up the nonstate group. In the internal contestation
model, therefore, actors choose to negotiate or spoil the peace based on the ex-
pected utility of each strategy for improving their position in an internal bal-
ance of power (see figure 3).

In most conflicts, dynamics of internal contestation coexist with those of ex-

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13. Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985),
pp. 267–272.

Figure 3. Internal Contestation Model
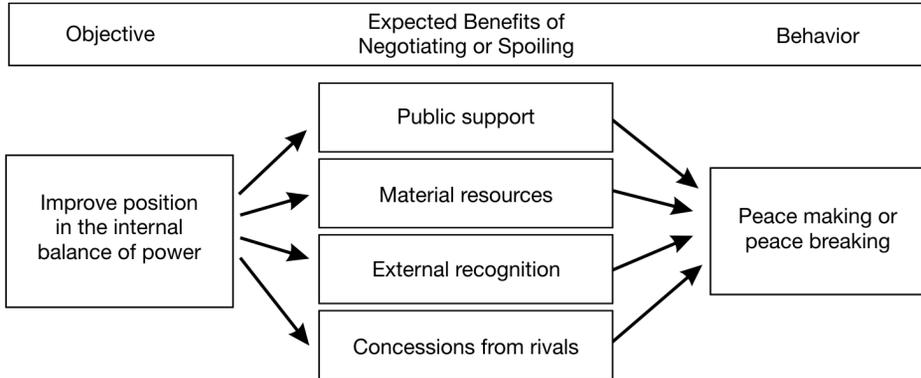
ternal utility. This raises two questions. First, how do internal and external motivations interact? Second, under what circumstances is an actor likely to be influenced by one set of motivations more than the other? The following hypotheses are a step toward answering these questions.

H1: Internal contestation motives are most likely to drive negotiating and spoiling by groups that lack an institutionalized system of legitimate representation.

Any nonstate group must institutionalize a system of representation if it is to settle the question of who has the right to speak on behalf of the collective. Where the legitimacy of this system is established, it will not remain a subject of contestation. In a conflict setting, actors within the nonstate group will thus be able to focus on attaining concessions from the other side. Where a system of representation is lacking, however, contenders within the nonstate group will continually attempt to influence the process of policymaking within their community. They will seek to do so directly through bargaining with each other and indirectly when they address themselves to the conflict with an external adversary.

A peace agreement, or even the prospect of a peace agreement, can heighten contestation over the terms of legitimate representation because it favors some factions and disfavors others. That some are invited to the negotiating table means that others are not. Some actors in a nonstate group might initiate peace talks to attain this advantage. Disadvantaged actors will likewise seek to improve their positions, but because they are weaker, they may find few strictly political means at their disposal. They may find that violence is the most

significant means of leverage over factions that want diplomacy to succeed. As there are no authoritative procedures for collective decisionmaking, it is rational for factions to turn to all spheres of external and internal politics in an effort to outstrip each other. When will internal politics drive factions to try to conclude a peace agreement, rather than block one? As the next hypothesis proposes, factions' behavior toward a settlement varies based on their power relative to each other.

H2: Whether internal contestation pressures lead groups to act as peace makers or peace breakers depends not only on their policy preferences, but also on their position in the internal balance of power.

The internal contestation model suggests three factors that shape whether a struggle for influence in a nonstate group leads factions to try to negotiate a peace agreement or to spoil it: (1) the position a group occupies in the internal balance of power; (2) the resources that it expects will improve that position; and (3) how, given circumstances, it expects that negotiating or spoiling will affect access to those resources. When analysts consider these factors for the groups involved in a conflict, they will be able to situate them on the analytical map in figure 3. They can then determine what groups are likely to do to promote their standing.

Hypothesis 2 carries two implications for theory and policy. First, in any nonstate group, leaders of the dominant faction are likely to have the most to gain from a peace process, as they can expect to be the ones invited to participate in negotiations. This outcome offers these individuals external recognition of their leadership and increases their access to material resources and institutional power over rival factions. For the same reason, leaders of subordinate factions are likely to have the most to lose from peace negotiations, and thus be the most likely to undertake spoiling behavior.

Second, peace makers and peace breakers may target their activity to influence audiences other than their external adversary. For example, spoilers' primary aim may be to affect public opinion in their own community. When people become frustrated with a peace process, an opposition faction may wager that spoiling the peace will increase its popularity. When the public is optimistic about a peace process, the same faction may decide to restrain its militant activity, regardless of its opposition to the agreement. Alternatively, a marginal faction may judge that it has only a slim chance of rallying public support. It thus may judge that the most effective way to promote its organizational interests is to increase its material resources or acquire a powerful

backer. The group might adapt its stance toward a peace settlement based on how it expects external patrons to respond. Under other circumstances, negotiators or spoilers might be most interested in influencing leaders in their own faction. For aspirants or lower-ranking cadres, signaling an ability to make or break a peace process can demonstrate to their leaders the potential costs of ignoring them. Analysis of the case of the Palestinian national movement illustrates these patterns.

Empirical Analysis

This section demonstrates how the behavior of Palestinian negotiators and spoilers in 1973–74 and 1993–2000 reflects many of the dynamics associated with the internal contestation model.

GENEVA PEACE CONFERENCE, 1973–74

The Palestinian nationalist movement that took shape at the end of World War I was largely shattered during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. The movement revived when refugees formed guerrilla groups that eventually came together under the umbrella of the Palestine Liberation Organization. The largest group in the PLO was the Fatah movement, led by PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat. To claim to speak for all Palestinians, however, the PLO had to include the full spectrum of Palestinian politics. The Fatah leadership agreed to allow other political groups to join the PLO as member factions and agreed to these factions' demand to retain autonomous strategies and structures.[14] As a result, the PLO was never a single decisionmaker as much as a forum for decisionmaking. It provided the political space in which numerous Palestinian groups, as well as the Arab states that stood behind them, negotiated their agendas in pursuit of goals acceptable to all.

Under these circumstances, the Fatah-PLO leadership faced continual competition from radical Marxist groups, such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP); hard-line factions such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine–General Command (PFLP-GC); proxy groups such as the Syria-backed Saiqah and the Iraq-backed Arab Liberation Front (ALF); and from other factions, such as the Palestine Popular Struggle Front (PPSF). These factions could not approximate Fatah's numbers, resources, or control of PLO

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14. Helena Cobban, *The Palestine Liberation Organization: People, Power, and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 139–140.

institutions. Instead, they often challenged Fatah by turning to militant rhetoric and activity. Consequently, attacks against Israel sometimes became a form of Palestinian internal politics by other means.

Competition for influence within the Palestinian national movement contributed to guerrilla attacks in the late 1960s and international terrorism in the early 1970s.[15] It also spurred spoiler violence as the PLO began to shift toward a diplomatic strategy. After 1969, the PLO's official goal was the elimination of the state of Israel and the establishment of a democratic state for Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Palestine. The PLO's means for achieving this goal was armed struggle. This strategy began to change in the aftermath of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, when the United States and the Soviet Union invited Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Israel to the Geneva Peace Conference on the Middle East. Hosted by the United Nations in December 1973, this first-ever Arab-Israeli summit aimed to be the preliminary step in a multiround negotiations process for reaching a comprehensive settlement in the region.

The PLO was not invited to the Geneva conference's first round. Nonetheless, the United States was willing to consider its inclusion in subsequent rounds,[16] a position shared by the Soviet Union.[17] This triggered a heated debate among Palestinian groups regarding whether the PLO should seek to participate in the peace process. Attending the Geneva conference would imply acceptance of UN Security Council Resolution 242, and hence recognition of Israel on some 78 percent of the land of Mandate Palestine. Although this was anathema to most Palestinians, many believed that international circumstances demanded that the PLO moderate its strategy. In late 1973 the DFLP became the first Palestinian group to endorse an interim settlement based on Palestinian sovereignty over only the occupied territories.[18] Shortly after, Fatah and Saiqah voiced their approval. In June 1974 the Fatah leadership convinced the PLO's parliament-in-exile, the Palestinian National Council (PNC), to approve what was dubbed the "phased program." This program called for the establishment of a national authority in any Palestinian areas liberated from or evacuated by Israel. In addition, for the first time, the PLO endorsed "all means of struggle," thereby sanctioning diplomatic methods in addition to

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15. See Ehud Yaari, *Strike Terror: The Story of Fatah,* trans. Esther Yaari (New York: Sabra, 1970); and John W. Amos II, *Palestinian Resistance: Organization of a National Movement* (New York: Pergamon, 1980).
16. Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982), p. 758.
17. Jorgen S. Nielsen, ed., *International Documents on Palestine, 1974* [hereafter cited as *IDP*] (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1977), pp. 315, 317, 335.
18. Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 335.

military ones. The leadership justified this strategic shift by insisting that establishment of a national authority was merely a stage toward liberation of all of Palestine. It was not lost on any Palestinian, however, that the phased program represented a monumental shift toward a two-state solution. Reinforcing this shift, PLO leaders articulated their desire to participate in the peace process.[19] Arafat also sent private messages to U.S. officials indicating his willingness to accept the state of Israel.[20]

Relying on an external utility logic, some observers attributed this embryonic Middle East peace making to a "hurting stalemate," insofar as the 1973 war demonstrated both Israel's vulnerability and the limits of Arabs' military power. A closer analysis, however, shows that PLO leaders were largely motivated by their competition with Jordan over who could claim legitimate representation of the Palestinian national community. The Hashemite kingdom had sought to acquire parts of Palestine even before the establishment of Israel.[21] It institutionalized its control over Palestinian lands, and a concomitant claim to speak for their inhabitants, when it ruled the West Bank between 1948 and 1967. Thereafter, the Palestinian resistance groups challenged Jordan's status as the de facto representative of Palestinian interests. Ongoing tension between Jordan's King Hussein and the PLO erupted in war in 1970–71, which ended in the expulsion of the PLO from Jordanian territory.

Against this backdrop, PLO leaders saw an existential need to prove that they, not Jordan, held the key to a peaceful settlement of the Palestine question. This need became more urgent after King Hussein issued his 1972 "United Arab Kingdom" proposal to unify the occupied territories with Jordan under his sovereignty.[22] At the very least, Hussein argued, a referendum should allow "our people" in the territories to choose "whether they want to stay with us, to unite with us, or to separate from us."[23] When Hussein asserted that no political fate should be forced upon Palestinian civilians, he was referring

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19. *Al-watha'iq al-arabiyah al-filastiniyah, 1973* [Palestinian Arab documents, hereafter *Al-watha'iq*] (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1974), pp. 466–467; Jorgen S. Nielsen, ed., *IDP, 1973* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1977), pp. 517–519; and *Al-watha'iq, 1975* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1976), pp. 129–130. For discussion, see Alain Gresh, *The PLO: The Struggle Within: Towards an Independent Palestinian State,* trans. A.M. Berrett (London: Zed, 1985), pp. 180–182, 220.
20. Kathleen Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine: Their Influence on U.S. Middle East Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press), p. 140.
21. Avi Shlaim, *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988).
22. *Al-watha'iq, 1973,* pp. 424–425; Abu Iyad (Salah Khalaf), with Eric Rouleau, *My Home, My Land: A Narrative of the Palestinian Struggle,* trans. Linda Butler Koseoglu (New York: Times Books, 1981), pp. 139–140; and Gresh, *The PLO,* p. 151.
23. Nielsen, *IDP, 1973,* p. 532.

to the PLO.[24] In 1973 the Arab League summit drafted a resolution to recognize the PLO's representation of the Palestinian people. It abandoned the resolution, however, when Jordan objected.[25]

PLO leaders were thus in a fierce bid to establish their credentials as the Palestinians' legitimate representatives. When they signaled their willingness to join the Geneva conference, it was largely with this objective in mind. Fearful of the implications, King Hussein met with U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and urged that Israel quickly return to Jordan the territory lost in 1967. Otherwise, the international community would find itself obliged to deal with the PLO.[26] Concurrently, PLO leaders tried to persuade their constituents that the PLO should accept an invitation to the Geneva conference or risk being represented by Jordan instead.

External utility models cannot account for these dynamics. As both Jordan and the PLO called on Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories, they were not contesting the substance of their strategy. Rather, they were contesting who should have the authority to speak for that strategy. Contrary to the predictions of external utility models, the PLO was not interested in the peace process because it wanted to maximize gains from Israel. Rather, as Fatah leader Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad) explained, the PLO did not expect Israel to relinquish land. "We wager that our enemy does not desire or want peace," Khalaf declared at a lecture in Beirut. "Whoever believes that it will withdraw from the occupied territory," he continued, "is delusional." What then was the PLO seeking to gain by participating in the Geneva conference? Khalaf did not mince words: "We are taking action and struggling for the [Palestinian] revolution's right to represent the people because King Hussein is lying in wait for our revolution and our people. . . . This is the touchstone of our political activity today."[27]

Like Fatah, the DFLP advocated the creation of a national authority in the territories because it strengthened the PLO's position over Jordan.[28] Even factions that condemned the phased program recognized that this was one of the program's objectives. The PFLP denounced Fatah leaders for racing to Geneva

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24. *Al-watha'iq, 1973,* pp. 493, 515.

25. Aaron David Miller, *The PLO and the Politics of Survival* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies Georgetown University, 1983), p. 35.

26. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval,* p. 786; and William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Washington, D.C. and Berkeley: Brookings Institution and the University of California Press, 1993), p. 205.

27. *Al-watha'iq, 1973,* pp. 469–472. For similar examples, see *Al-watha'iq, 1974,* pp. 19–20; and Nielsen, *IDP, 1974,* p. 509.

28. *Al-watha'iq, 1973,* pp. 430–432.

"just so that they may compete with the subservient regime [Jordan] as to who is to negotiate with the Israeli enemy."[29] For Arafat, however, what was at stake in this battle over representation was no less than the survival of the Palestinian national movement. "The Arab states would make peace without us if we did not express our demands in a realistic way," the PLO chairman later recalled. Had that happened, he went on, "We would have been finished."[30]

In inching toward diplomacy, the PLO-Fatah leadership sought a number of the expected benefits of negotiating identified in figure 3. Primarily, it sought external recognition. Many countries found it untenable to endorse the PLO over Jordan as long as the PLO was identified as a terrorist organization. By warming to the peace process, the PLO sought to alter the costs and benefits of that equation. Alain Gresh explained, "For the PLO as for the Arab states, it was thus clear that the price for Arab recognition was moderation."[31] In addition, the PLO leadership sought public support, particularly among Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where activists repeatedly appealed for a compromise settlement focused on ending the Israeli occupation.[32] At the same time, King Hussein was taking steps to woo West Bankers to endorse his leadership.[33] Meanwhile, Fatah leaders understood that they had to demonstrate moderation if they were to solidify their West Bank support and counter Hussein's efforts to do the same.

The campaign to claim representation of the Palestinian people motivated not only the Fatah leadership to embrace diplomacy. It also motivated PLO opposition factions to attempt to spoil that diplomacy. As long as the PLO remained an umbrella for diverse groups and not an institution with a monopoly on coercion in a given territory, it could not impose its program on those who disagreed. In this weakly institutionalized setting, the position of each faction in the internal Palestinian balance of power shaped its inclination to act as a peace maker or peace breaker. Fatah led the Palestinian movement because it was positioned to speak for the PLO at Geneva. Fatah's standing encouraged it to seek outside recognition, to solidify its popularity among

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29. "Documents and Source Material: Arab Documents on Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *Journal of Palestine Studies,* Vol. 4, No. 2 (January 1975), p. 169.
30. Alan Hart, *Arafat: A Political Biography* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 346–347.
31. Gresh, *The PLO*, p. 153. See also Ronald R. Macintyre, "The Palestine Liberation Organization: Tactics, Strategies, and Options towards the Geneva Peace Conference," *Journal of Palestine Studies,* Vol. 4, No. 4 (July 1975), pp. 65–89.
32. See *Al-watha'iq, 1973,* pp. 485–487; and "Documents and Source Material: Arab Documents on Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *Journal of Palestine Studies,* Vol. 3, No. 3 (April 1974), pp. 187–191.
33. See *Filastin al-Thawra,* September 26, 1973, pp. 16–17.

Figure 4. Annual Fatalities Due to Terrorist Attacks in Israel, 1968–2007
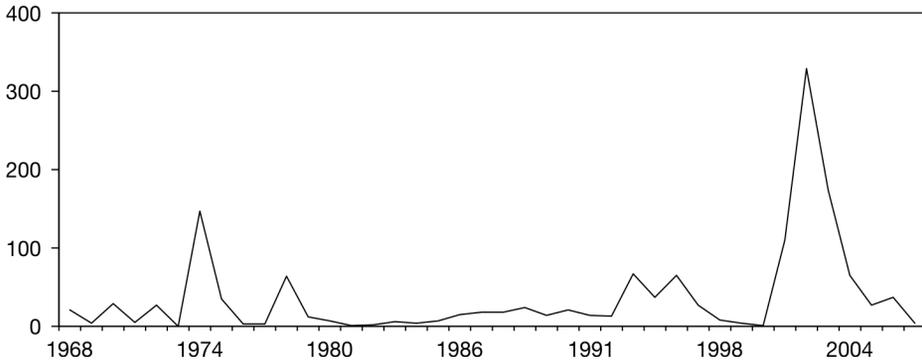
SOURCE: RAND Terrorism Chronology and RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database.
NOTE: These data include all domestic and international attacks launched against Israeli military, government, and civilian targets.

Palestinians under occupation, and to advance the status of the PLO along with its own. Smaller PLO factions, perennially fighting against what they called "Fatah hegemony," faced a different set of incentives.

Thus, after the 1974 PNC decision to establish a national authority in any part of historic Palestine, the PFLP, PFLP-GC, PPSF, and ALF suspended their membership in PLO executive councils and formed the Front of Palestinian Forces Rejecting Surrenderist Solutions. In interviews, lectures, and literature distributed among its constituents, the Rejection Front denounced Fatah's politicking as treason.[34] It also turned to spoiler violence, carrying out thirteen terrorist attacks inside Israel in 1974 that left 147 people dead. Terrorism claimed more Israeli lives in 1974 than in any other year until the height of the second intifada in 2002 (see figure 4).

External utility models would suggest that this spoiling behavior was intended to undermine Israeli trust of Palestinian moderates or to achieve the liberation of land in a way that negotiations could not. Such explanations are insufficient: while the Fatah leadership sought entry into the peace process to avoid being marginalized in Arab and international politics, hard-line factions challenged these peace efforts to avoid being marginalized in Palestinian politics. Rejectionist factions' apprehensions intensified with the Geneva conference. For Arab states, the debate about whether the PLO should represent

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34. For examples, see *Al-watha'iq, 1973;* and *Al-watha'iq, 1974.*

Palestinians in the peace process elicited questions about what kind of PLO was worthy of such responsibility. In exchange for recognition of the PLO, some Arab leaders argued that it was necessary to "change the structure of the [Palestinian Liberation] Organization from within and turn it into a moderate and acceptable organization."[35]

Some Palestinian radicals saw such comments as threats to their political survival; spoiler activity offered a powerful way of fighting those threats. Spoiler violence allowed smaller factions to impose themselves as powers with which the Fatah leadership had to reckon. It showed PLO leaders that the opposition could disrupt their diplomatic efforts or create fissures in the national movement should Fatah seek international recognition at the opposition's expense. Carrying out attacks against Israel also allowed smaller factions to transfer competition for political influence from the realm of formal PLO institutions, where Fatah dominated, to the military realms in which all factions enjoyed freedom of maneuver. When the PFLP-GC took the lead with a suicide attack on the northern Israeli community of Kiryat Shemona in April 1974, it was seeking the political influence that it lacked, given its small numbers in Palestinian councils. Indeed, military activity proved effective in compensating for political weakness, as the attack brought the faction new fame and recruits.[36]

Once some guerrilla groups increased their attacks, other groups followed or risked being left behind.[37] Spoiling thus doubled as a form of competition for nationalist credibility and popular support. Whereas the PNC program was a vehicle for winning support among Palestinians under occupation, fighting that program was a way to gain popularity in the Palestinian diaspora. The support of the Palestinian refugee population was crucial because they represented the direct constituents of PLO factions based in Lebanon. The Palestinian diaspora also included affluent Palestinians living in the West and the Persian Gulf, who often held extremist opinions because they could, in Khalaf's view, "afford the luxury of intransigence."[38]

The need to compete with spoilers was not lost on supporters of a compromise settlement. A month after the PFLP-GC's attack on Kiryat Shemona, the

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35. "Who Should Represent the Palestinians?" *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (April 1975), p. 143.
36. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State,* p. 339.
37. For similar dynamics in a later era, see Mia M. Bloom, "Palestinian Suicide Bombing: Popular Support, Market Share, and Outbidding," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 119, No. 1 (Spring 2004), pp. 61–88.
38. Iyad, *My Home, My Land*, pp. 142–143.

DFLP carried out its own terrorist attack on an Israeli school in Ma'alot. Given that the DFLP was the first to advocate the controversial phased program, some of its leaders believed that the attack was necessary, to quote DFLP military commander Mamduh Nawfal, "to deflect the accusations of treason."[39] Two weeks after the Ma'alot attack, the DFLP launched another attack, declaring that its purpose was to "reinforce the phased political program."[40] When it launched a third attack inside Israel in November 1974, it announced that its intent was to demonstrate that Palestinians were negotiating from a position of strength.[41] The DFLP thus advocated a peaceful settlement while engaging in violence to bolster the prospects of that settlement. Such behavior was perplexing as a strategy for convincing Israel to make concessions. Yet it was rational as a strategy for advancing the DFLP's standing among its Palestinian competitors, where the "gun" signaled the credibility of the olive branch.

In turning to spoiling, rejectionist groups were concerned not only about maintaining the support of their constituents, but also about how a diplomatic agreement might further reduce their power in Palestinian politics. Bard O'Neill argued that the PFLP opposed a "ministate" in the occupied territories because it knew that "if it came to handing out portfolios in any government, it would not fare well."[42] Fear of the domestic political consequences of a diplomatic settlement also contributed to ALF's spoiler stance. This trepidation was not so much its own, however, as it was that of its Iraqi patron. In O'Neill's view, Iraqi leaders regarded an uncompromising policy toward Israel as "an effective means of deflecting attention away from their own lack of popular legitimacy."[43]

Given Palestinian factions' dependence on foreign patrons, Palestinian would-be negotiators and spoilers also understood that their stance toward the Geneva conference had implications for their ability to acquire resources. For some factions, spoiler activity was a way to obtain support from radical Arab states. Thus in the wake of the Ma'alot attack, Libya rewarded the DFLP with a $1 million monthly stipend.[44] For the mainstream PLO leadership, on the other hand, moderation offered opportunities for support from the Soviet Union.[45] Moscow pressured Palestinian factions to accept a compromise settle-

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39. Quoted in Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State,* p. 341.
40. Ibid., p. 341.
41. Hart, *Arafat,* p. 371.
42. Bard E. O'Neill, *Armed Struggle in Palestine: A Political-Military Analysis* (Denver: Westview, 1978), pp. 215–216.
43. Ibid.
44. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State,* pp. 339–341.
45. On Fatah's overtures to the Soviet Union, see *Filastin al-Thawra,* December 1, 1974.

ment and rewarded Fatah and the DFLP with high-profile diplomatic visits, training, and equipment when they did.[46] With the advent of détente, Arafat hoped that Fatah's ties to the Soviet Union would provide an inroad to the United States, as well.[47] These new diplomatic relations stood to strengthen Fatah's position within the PLO and the PLO's position in international politics.

Spoiling as a means of contesting leadership occurred within PLO factions as much as between them. At the 1974 PNC meeting, the leaders of all of the PLO opposition factions voted in favor of the phased program. It was only afterward, when they faced strong resistance from within their organizations, that they annulled that decision and formed the Rejectionist Front. Khalaf recalled, "No sooner had the Palestinian Congress session ended than arguments and outbidding erupted within the various organizations, with the more radical elements in each accusing their comrades of having approved a 'liquidationist' text. Needless to say, it was the extremists who prevailed over the moderates, as is usually the case in such debates."[48]

Intrafactional bargaining also drove spoiler attacks. Yezid Sayigh believes that a suicide mission by the PFLP-GC against a kibbutz in northern Israel in June 1974 was perpetrated by a radical wing of the organization to protest the seeming moderation of its leader, Ahmed Jibril. In response, Jibril retracted his vote in favor of the PNC resolution.[49] Contestation was also intense inside Fatah. Although top Fatah leaders sought an invitation to attend the Geneva peace conference, there was no such consensus among the movement's rank and file.[50] Understood in this context, one motivation for Fatah's suicide attack in Nahariya in June 1974 was to appease hard-line opinion in its own organization.[51]

For Fatah leaders, violence was also vital for preserving the cohesion of the Palestinian national movement. In the absence of statehood, armed struggle had become a unifying slogan and enterprise for the far-flung Palestinian community.[52] The paradoxical outcome was that Fatah leaders pursued diplomacy to increase the PLO's regional and international clout, but it could not rely solely on diplomacy, because this risked weakening the national consensus on

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46. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State,* p. 342.
47. Gresh, *The PLO,* p. 155.
48. Iyad, *My Home, My Land,* p. 142
49. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State,* p. 341.
50. Ibid., p. 351; and Gresh, p. 142.
51. See *Filasteen al-Thawra,* September 26, 1974.
52. Iyad, *My Home, My Land,* p. 30.

which the PLO was based. These dynamics served, in Shaul Mishal's words, to keep PLO "diplomacy in chains."[53] Thus, even when there were compelling strategic incentives to embrace the peace process, pressures stemming from internal Palestinian politics kept armed struggle alive.

Outside observers typically failed to distinguish between the overlapping internal and external political rationales behind what became observable as diplomatic outreach or terrorism. Israeli leaders dismissed the PLO's peace overtures as "double talk" and argued that Palestinian violence was the same, whether carried out by Fatah or by rejectionists.[54] Yet those who followed the Palestinians' internal dialogue disagreed. In the conclusion of his study of the PLO, O'Neill appealed to Israel to recognize "the fact that the PLO and the Arab states do not constitute a monolithic grouping" and to "refrain from the tendency to treat all acts of terrorism as if they were sanctioned by the PLO."[55]

In the end, the Geneva conference never held a second round, and the Palestinians' bid to join the peace talks became a moot point. Before long, the PLO was embroiled in Lebanon's civil war; the United States' shuttle diplomacy marginalized the multilateral search for a comprehensive settlement; and Egypt made a separate peace with Israel that radically altered the Middle East equation. From an external conflict utility perspective, PLO overtures toward peace making had failed. Viewed as a form of internal contestation, however, they were successful. In October 1974 the Arab League rewarded the PLO's pragmatist shift by officially recognizing the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The following month the United Nations invited Arafat to address the General Assembly and granted the PLO observer status. The PLO thus outstripped Jordan in the race to speak for the Palestinians. Its endorsement of a moderate program had been crucial to that outcome.

As a means of contesting legitimate representation, Palestinian rejectionists' military activity was also successful. Spoiler violence demonstrated that hardline Palestinian factions were supported by public opinion and external patrons. The rejectionists' actions sent a warning to the Fatah leadership that it could not alone dictate the Palestinian national struggle: Fatah's efforts to convince the world to recognize the PLO would be meaningless if the rejec-

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53. Shaul Mishal, *The PLO under Arafat: Between Gun and Olive Branch* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986) chap. 3. See also Matti Steinberg, "The PLO and the Mini-Settlement," *Jerusalem Quarterly,* No. 21 (Fall 1981), pp. 129–144.
54. See "From the Hebrew Press," *Journal of Palestine Studies,* Vol. 3, No. 4 (Summer 1974), pp. 147–155.
55. O'Neill, *Armed Struggle in Palestine,* p. 225.

tionists caused the PLO, or the organizations that made it up, to fragment. The Palestinian leadership took note of this warning. Although spoilers did not terminate the PLO leadership's diplomacy, they did manage to circumscribe it into the 1980s.

In summary, the PLO's 1973–74 debate over Palestinian participation in the Geneva conference demonstrates how both peace making and peace breaking can be the product of competition within the same nonstate group. During this era, the question, "Who speaks for the Palestinians?" remained unsettled. Fatah warmed to joining the peace process at least in part to ensure the political survival of the PLO under its leadership. At the same time, opposition factions rejected the peace process at least in part to ensure their own political survival within the PLO. Negotiating and spoiling therefore revealed a common dynamic: Palestinian groups were motivated not only by their goals vis-à-vis Israel, but also by their desire to remain politically relevant in the Arab-Palestinian arena.

THE OSLO PEACE PROCESS, 1993–2000

The expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon to Tunisia in 1982 initiated the decline of the PLO's influence as a regional player. The 1987 eruption of the intifada, a grassroots uprising of Palestinians in the occupied territories, returned the Palestinian national struggle to the forefront of world headlines. In September 1993 Israel and the PLO publicly ratified the Oslo peace process with a declaration to "put an end to decades of confrontation and conflict."[56] Israel gradually transferred control over most of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to a self-governing apparatus called the Palestinian National Authority (PA). Israel and the PLO pledged to conclude a final peace settlement by May 1999.

From the commencement of secret talks with Israeli envoys in late 1992, the PLO's desire for a peace agreement was intertwined with its goal of strengthening its exclusive leadership of the Palestinian cause. Here it is important to emphasize that, by the 1990s, the line had blurred between the PLO as an institution and Arafat as its figurehead. The assassination of Arafat's main contenders—Fatah leaders Khalil al-Wazir (killed by Israel in 1988) and Salah Khalaf (killed by Palestinian extremist Abu Nidal in 1991)—steadily concentrated authority in his hands. In Sayigh's words, Arafat's "jealous grip on power" had become a leading determinant of Palestinian national policy.[57]

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56. Preamble, Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, September 13, 1993.
57. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State,* pp. 654–655, 690–691.

One threat to this power came from a new generation of nationalist activists raised under occupation and politicized in Israeli prisons, Palestinian universities, and the network of political and civic organizations flourishing in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.[58] The first intifada raised the stature of these activists (the "inside leadership") relative to the Tunis-based PLO (the "outside leadership"). In mobilizing mass protest against the occupation, inside leaders demonstrated a unique capacity to inspire residents of the territories and to pressure Israel where it was weakest. The 1991 Madrid peace conference likewise raised the profile of Palestinian leaders other than Arafat. Because Israel refused to allow PLO officials to attend the conference, a delegation from the occupied territories represented Palestinians in their place. This turn of events, as well as West Bankers' participation in subsequent negotiations in Washington, catapulted new Palestinian names and faces into the international spotlight.

Palestinian negotiators and activists repeatedly professed their loyalty to Tunis.[59] They maintained constant communication with the PLO leadership and heeded its instructions. Nevertheless, Arafat tended to view these negotiators and activists as a potential threat to his monopoly on representing the Palestinian people.[60] It was in part to assert his sole authority that he developed a channel of secret talks with Israel and even deliberately obstructed the efforts of the Palestinian negotiators in Washington.[61] As one Israeli envoy to Oslo recalled, "Arafat was sending us a definite message: the Washington talks would grind on endlessly, but in Oslo, where the PLO was officially represented, he was prepared to compromise."[62]

Arafat expected peace making to lead to external recognition of the PLO under his stewardship. The Oslo agreement compelled Israel and the United States to recognize the PLO chairman as the only person able to act authoritatively in the name of the Palestinian struggle. It also gave Arafat the material

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58. Ali Jarbawi, *Al-Intifadah wa-al-qiyadat al-siyasiyah fi al-Diffah al-Gharbiyah wa-Qita'a Gazzah: bahth fi al-nukbah al-siyasiyah* [The intifada and political leadership in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: A study in political elites] (Beirut: Dar al-Taliyah, 1989); Joost R. Hiltermann, *Behind the Intifada: Labor and Women's Movements in the Occupied Territories* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991); Glenn E. Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); and Meir Litvak, "Inside versus Outside: The Challenge of the Local Leadership, 1967–1994," in Avraham Sela and Moshe Ma'oz, eds., *The PLO and Israel: From Armed Conflict to Political Settlement, 1964–1994* (New York: St. Martin's, 1997), pp. 171–196.
59. For example, see Hanan Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), pp. 82–84, 185.
60. Nigel Craig Parsons, *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority: From Oslo to al-Aqsa* (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 70–73.
61. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, p. 655.
62. Uri Savir, *The Process: 1,100 Days that Changed the Middle East* (New York: Random House, 1998), p. 4.

resources necessary to stem the PLO's organizational decline and fiscal crisis. Arafat's support of Saddam Hussein in the 1990–91 Persian Gulf War had resulted in the PLO's isolation and loss of financial support. It was forced to reduce salaries for PLO personnel and funding for social services for its Palestinian constituents. Access to funds was imperative for matters of internal contestation because neopatrimonialism had become a basis of Arafat's rule.[63] In the absence of a fully institutionalized system of legitimate representation, the PLO chairman used jobs, benefits, and other material inducements to secure the loyalty of subordinates and co-opt opponents. Arafat correctly wagered that the Oslo agreement would invite a new flow of international donations, as well as profits from imports, exports, and other economic transactions in the territories transferred to PA control.

In addition to delivering outside recognition and resources, the Oslo accords served the Fatah-PLO leadership's internal contestation needs by helping it to confront the challenge of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas). Through its confrontation with the Israeli occupation and its creation of a broad network of social services, Hamas emerged from the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood to become a formidable non-PLO force. In addition, Hamas had condemned Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait and was rewarded with generous funding from the Gulf. Arafat attempted to co-opt Hamas by inviting it to join the PLO, but he abandoned the initiative when Hamas demanded 40 percent of the seats in PLO bodies. Against this backdrop, the Oslo peace process offered Arafat a way to contain Hamas. It pushed the Islamist opposition to the margins of a completely transformed Palestinian political landscape.

In contrast to the expectations of external utility models, therefore, much of the Palestinian leadership's urgency in negotiating the Oslo agreement stemmed from its hope to maximize gains vis-à-vis internal rivals more than vis-à-vis Israel. Regardless, the peace process did not prevent the continuation of acts of violence and bad faith on both sides. Israel transferred 60 percent of the Gaza Strip and 37 percent of the West Bank to the PA. Yet during the seven years following the signing of the Oslo agreement, it also confiscated tens of thousands of acres of Palestinian land, doubled its settler population, and imposed unprecedented restrictions on Palestinian freedom of movement.[64] The PLO officially recognized Israel and coordinated security, economic, and other

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63. Rex Brynen, "The Neopatrimonial Dimension of Palestinian Politics," *Journal of Palestine Studies,* Vol. 25, No. 1 (October 1995), pp. 23–36; and Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State,* pp. 454–460.
64. Sara Roy, "Palestinian Society and Economy: The Continued Denial of Possibility," *Journal of Palestine Studies,* Vol. 30, No. 4 (Summer 2001), p. 10.

matters on a nearly daily basis. Yet Palestinians also carried out attacks that claimed more Israeli lives during the six-year period after the Oslo agreement (258) than during the six-year period before it (160).[65]

These attacks were examples of spoiler violence insofar as their main perpetrators, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, swore their opposition to the Oslo process. External utility analyses propose that these spoilers intended their attacks to undercut Israeli confidence in the PA's ability to deliver peace, to provoke Israeli repression, or to pressure Israel to make concessions that it otherwise would not. These explanations, however, cannot account for two anomalies. First, if Hamas's and Islamic Jihad's behavior was solely attributable to their opposition to the peace process, then there also should have been spoiling attacks by PLO leftist factions opposed to Oslo. That there were not, however, was logical in the context of internal contestation. The PFLP had become increasingly dependent on Arafat's grip on PLO monies. The DFLP, meanwhile, splintered when pro-Oslo members broke off and formed their own party. Compounding these troubles, the collapse of the Soviet Union left Palestinian Marxists without a superpower backer or an ideology that many Palestinians found germane for the times.

The PFLP and the DFLP thus occupied an extremely weak position in the internal Palestinian balance of power. As such, the resources that best safeguarded their organizational survival were their continued standing within the PLO and funds from Arafat. They would have jeopardized both had they turned to spoiling. What they might have gained—support from hard-line Palestinian public opinion—was not significant, as Marxists had little chance of surpassing Islamists in competition for anti-Oslo constituents. Given this balance sheet, spoiler violence would have caused leftist Palestinian factions more losses than gains in the realm of internal politics, even if it better reflected their opposition to Oslo.

The second anomaly left unexplained by external utility models is Hamas's measure of political pragmatism. As much as Hamas wished to overturn the Oslo agreement, it recognized that Palestinian and international support for the new status quo rendered that improbable. On these grounds, Hamas leaders declared that they sought neither to engage in conflict with the PLO leadership nor to defeat the peace process by force.[66] They also announced that they

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65. Total Palestinian fatalities were 364 in the six-year period after the Oslo agreement and 1,162 before it. See B'Tselem, *Oslo: Before and After, the Status of Human Rights in the Occupied Territories* (Jerusalem: May 1999), p. 7.

66. Khalid al-Hindi, *"Faham al-haraka li-tabi'at al-sira'a ma'a al-mushroua' al-sahiyoniyah wa filsafat idarathu"* [The movement's understanding of the nature of the conflict with the Zionist project and

might accept an extended cease-fire if Israel withdrew to its 1967 borders.[67] Skeptics of the sincerity of these gestures insist that Hamas never revoked its 1988 charter calling for the eradication of Israel. Yet students of the movement argue that the charter is a historical relic that has no practical influence on the movement.[68] They insist that Hamas has articulated its willingness to accommodate a two-state solution in deed, even if it refuses to recognize Israel in principle. As recently as the spring of 2008, press statements by Hamas leader Khalid Meshal indicate that this is the movement's effective stance.[69]

A theory of spoiling as internal contestation helps to explain why, given this political pragmatism, Hamas carried out suicide bombings against Israeli targets. Islamist groups viewed the Oslo accords not only as an intolerable surrender of the Islamic land of Palestine, but also as a threat to their existence. In carrying out violence against Israel, they sought, among other goals, to help secure a place in the new Palestinian political arena. This arena was characterized by a weakly institutionalized system of representation. In the absence of clear rules regarding how opposition groups could improve their bargaining position with Arafat, spoiler violence was as viable a means as any.

The logic underlying Hamas's spoiler behavior evolved, as did Hamas's standing in the Palestinian balance of power. During the peace process's early years, Hamas's attacks against Israel were in part a tactic for protecting its interests vis-à-vis its main political rivals: the PA, the PLO that gave rise to it, and the Fatah movement that dominated both. Just as the Palestinian leadership used support for the Oslo peace process to outmaneuver rivals and maintain dominance, so was it predictable that those rivals would use their

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its philosophy for managing it], in Jawad el-Hamad and Eyad al-Barghouti, eds., *Dirasat al-fikr al-siyasi li-harakat al-muqawama al-islamiyah (Hamas), 1987–1996* [A study in the political ideology of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)] (Amman: Middle East Studies Centre, 1997), pp. 131–135; Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 2; and Graham Usher and Bassam Jarrar, "The Islamist Movement and the Palestinian Authority," *Middle East Report*, No. 189 (July–August 1994), pp. 28–29.

67. Khalid Hroub, "Harakat Hamas bayn al-Sulta al-Filastiniyya wa-Isra'il: Min Muthallath al Qiwa ila al-Mitraqa wal-Sandan" [The Hamas movement between the Palestinian Authority and Israel: From the triangle of forces to the hammer and anvil], *Majallat al-Dirasat al-Filastiniyyah*, No. 18 (Spring 1994), pp. 30–34; Mishal and Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas*, pp. 71–72; and Charmaine Seitz, "Coming of Age: Hamas's Rise to Prominence in the Post-Oslo Era," in Joel Beinin and Rebecca L. Stein, eds., *The Struggle for Sovereignty: Palestine and Israel, 1993–2005* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 113–117.

68. See, for example, Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within* (Northampton, Mass.: Olive Branch, 2007), chap. 7.

69. *"Mishal li-ayyam: la nakhasha al-intikhabat al-mubakira wa hathihi sharutinah laha"* [Mishal to Al-Ayyam: Early elections do not scare us and this is our condition for them], *Al-Ayyam*, April 2, 2008, p. 13.

opposition to Oslo to outmaneuver the leadership and challenge that dominance. Jeroen Gunning explains, "Oslo provided a golden opportunity to salvage [Arafat's] dreams of statehood, stay in power, and keep Hamas and other contenders (including Fatah's local cadres) out. . . . Each subsequent attack on the peace process, by Hamas or other contenders, must therefore be seen as, at least in part, an attack on this elite arrangement."[70] In communiqués issued after some of their bombings, Hamas and Islamic Jihad frequently warned the PA not to "collaborate" with Israel by arresting their cadres and attacking their institutions. In signaling that Islamists retained the power to disrupt, suicide attacks pressured the Palestinian leadership to give them a "seat at the table" of Palestinian decisionmaking, or at least not to destroy them.[71] Unlike leftist anti-Oslo groups, Hamas could be bold in challenging Arafat's peace strategy because its funding and base of popular support lay outside the PLO.

Undermining the peace process was a considerable form of leverage over the PLO-PA leadership. Arafat had staked his international credibility on the pledge that he would deliver an end to Palestinian violence and that his domestic credibility on the pledge that Oslo would deliver statehood and economic recovery. Spoiler violence threatened both and was thus a powerful tactic for compelling Arafat to reach a compromise with Hamas rather than to shut it out of political life. This was particularly true during the early years of the Oslo process, when Hamas calculated that public opinion would punish the PA if it declared war on the opposition. "This is a real dilemma," a PA official explained at the time. "If we adhere strictly to the agreement and even just round up suspects," he went on, "we are jeopardizing our legitimacy among our people."[72]

Hamas also used spoiling behavior to attain public support. A grassroots organization attentive to the popular mood, Hamas was loath to be seen as obstructionist whenever the Palestinian public was optimistic that negotiations could produce results.[73] This had occurred during the Madrid conference, which polls showed enjoyed the backing of 87 percent of Palestinians in the

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70. Jeroen Gunning, "Peace with Hamas? The Transforming Potential of Political Participation," *International Affairs,* Vol. 80, No. 2 (March 2004), p. 243.
71. See Hroub, "Harakat Hamas bayn al-Sulta al-Filastiniyya wa-Isra'il," pp. 28–29; Graham Usher, "Hamas Seeks a Place at the Table," *Middle East International,* May 13, 1994; and Mishal and Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas,* p. 73.
72. Quoted in Lamis Andoni, "Palestinian Islamist Group Signals Shift in Strategy," *Christian Science Monitor,* September 13, 1994.
73. See Barry Rubin, "The Future of Palestinian Politics: Factions, Frictions, and Functions," *Middle East Review of International Affairs,* Vol. 4, No. 3 (September 2000); and Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2000), pp. 100, 119–120.

West Bank and Gaza.[74] Hamas opposed Palestinian participation in Madrid and subsequent negotiations in Washington, but restrained its resistance in deference to public opinion. As those negotiations continued and failed to yield results, however, popular support withered. Encouraged by the shift in opinion, Hamas became more militant in its opposition to both the PLO and Israel.[75]

Hamas's spoiling behavior continued in the wake of the Oslo agreement. As Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh declared a year after its signing, "The scale of the attacks will be determined by the level of popular support for such a strategy."[76] Hamas thus typically turned to spoiling when it anticipated that the public would reward it for such tactics. It carried out its first suicide bombing inside Israel after a Jewish settler killed 29 Palestinian worshippers in Hebron's Ibrahimi Mosque in February 1994. This event appalled Palestinians, the majority of whom sympathized with the revenge bombing.[77] Likewise, when Israel assassinated Hamas explosives expert Yahiya Ayyash in January 1996, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians participated in demonstrations to mourn his death. Emboldened by this reaction, Hamas launched three revenge suicide attacks in Israeli cities between February 25 and March 3. A fourth bombing by Islamic Jihad brought the toll to 57 dead and 216 injured in eight days.

With these bombings, however, Hamas went too far. The attacks contributed to bringing the right-wing Likud to power in Israel, which became another nail in the coffin of the peace process. They also influenced Palestinian internal politics, altering the costs and benefits of subsequent spoiling behavior. Under intense Israeli and U.S. pressure, Arafat carried out a sweeping campaign against the Islamist opposition, arresting some 1,200 individuals and raiding Hamas-dominated institutions. Popular opinion gave the PA a mandate to implement a crackdown that at other times would have been politically unpalatable. Approximately 70 percent of Palestinians said that they did not support the Islamists' attacks, and 59 percent approved the PA's measures against them.[78]

Spoiling thus changed from being a potential asset in opposition factions' quest for political power to being a liability. In the language of social move-

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74. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace,* pp. 155–157.
75. See Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 75.
76. Quoted in Andoni, "Palestinian Islamist Group Signals Shift in Strategy."
77. Hroub, "Harakat Hamas bayn al-Sulta al-Filastiniyya wa-Isra'il," pp. 28–29.
78. Center for Palestine Research and Studies, *Public Opinion Poll,* No. 22, March 29–31, 1996.

ment theory, the political opportunity structures had changed. As Islamic Jihad's secretary-general said, "The decision to continue military action exists . . . but the opportunity does not. . . . Martyrdom operations are governed primarily by favorable conditions on the ground."[79] Public opinion was a key variable in shaping the conditions governing the contestation for power within the Palestinian national movement. "Hamas's military capability depends on its popular support and the degree of cooperation by supporters," an Israeli analyst observed. "The movement's difficulties to launch attacks since 1997 derive from changes in Palestinian society," he continued.[80] Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin reasoned that Hamas's opposition to the peace process would accomplish little besides provoking a showdown with the PA.[81] Aware that such a step would carry internal political losses, the Islamist Movement reoriented its focus from military action to social activism after 1996.[82]

Hamas's wish to challenge the PA thus encouraged Hamas to participate in spoiling violence at some times and discouraged it at others. Apart from these interfactional factors, contestation internal to Hamas also served as an impetus to spoiling. Living under the PA and aware of society's longing for calm, many of Hamas's Gaza-based leaders believed that they had to accommodate to the new reality produced by the Oslo process. Hamas leaders based in Jordan and then in Syria tended to favor a more hawkish line. Their control over Hamas's financial resources, political decisionmaking, and military brigades meant that their preferences usually dominated.[83] Still, tension between the inside and outside leaderships, and between the political and military wings, remained a source of contestation within the movement. Arafat encouraged these divisions in an attempt to isolate Hamas hard-liners and make a partner of moderates.[84]

The intrafactional dimension of Hamas's spoiling behavior came to the fore following five suicide bombings between October 1994 and August

79. "Interview with Islamic Jihad Movement Secretary General Dr. Ramadan Abdallah Shallah," *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat,* October 18, 1996, Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS)/World News Connection (WNC), insert October 24, 1996.

80. Ori Slonim, "The Hamas and Terror: An Alternative Explanation for the Use of Violence," *Strategic Assessment,* Vol. 2, No. 3 (December 1999).

81. "Interview with Hamas leader Shaykh Ahmad Yasin," *Delo* (Slovenia), October 27, 1997, FBIS/WNC, insert November 2, 1998.

82. Sara Roy, "The Transformation of Islamic NGOs in Palestine," *Middle East Report,* No. 214 (Spring 2000), pp. 24–26.

83. See Mishal and Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas,* pp. 56, 58–59.

84. Graham Usher, *Dispatches from Palestine: The Rise and Fall of the Oslo Peace Process* (London: Pluto, 1999), p. 86; and Peter Ezra Weinberger, *Co-opting the PLO: A Critical Reconstruction of the Oslo Accords, 1993–1995* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2006), p. 121.

1995.[85] Seeking a modus vivendi with the opposition, the PA invited Gaza-based Hamas leaders to high-level talks. In response, Hamas unofficially halted the bombings in late summer 1995, and several leaders indicated that they would support an enduring cease-fire if the PA agreed to stop detaining their cadres. Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres responded positively. Yet just as it appeared that a Hamas-PA truce might become possible, Hamas's Amman-based Political Bureau effectively vetoed it.[86] It may have been under pressure from foreign governments or been worried that the PA was planning to use Hamas insiders to marginalize Hamas outsiders. Regardless, the PA-Hamas dialogue session closed without Hamas renouncing its freedom to carry out attacks against Israel. A few months later, Israel assassinated Ayyash, and Hamas's suicide bombings resumed in full force.

The bombings suggested that violence against Israel was becoming a method by which different sectors within Hamas battled to determine the identity and strategy of the Islamist movement. A unit believed to be a Hamas splinter group announced responsibility for two of the bombings following Ayyash's assassination. Gaza-based Hamas leaders claimed to have no involvement in the violence, and some called the attacks a mistake.[87] Several sources indicated that these leaders actually wished to end attacks against Israel, but the movement's external leadership disagreed.[88] In authorizing the bombings, the outside leadership may have been asserting its authority over the Gaza-based leadership.[89] Or perhaps the military wing was demonstrating its right to determine Hamas's strategy. Spoiling in the context of internal divisions generated confusion regarding who had carried out the bombings, with what audience in mind, and for what purpose. A Jerusalem-based weekly reported, "A series of leaflets, denials, and accusations left observers . . . shocked at the apparent state of chaos within the Islamist resistance. It remains unclear whether the bombers were acting on their own initiative as part of a radical cell, were carrying out the orders of the leadership in exile, or were acting on behalf of the internal organization, which feared political marginalization."[90]

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85. See Khalid Amayreh, "PNA and Hamas: Signs of Rapprochement," *Middle East International,* October, 20, 1995.
86. Mishal and Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas,* pp. 73–74.
87. "Hamas Leaders Call for End to Violence," *Palestine Report,* March 8, 1996.
88. Salwa Kanaana, "The End of Armed Operations?" *Palestine Report,* May 31, 1996; Muhammed El-Hassan, "Internal Divisions Still Plague Hamas," *Palestine Report,* August 23, 1996; and Usher, *Dispatches from Palestine,* p. 86.
89. In later years, the inverse would occur. See Zvi Bar'el, "Women's Work," *Haaretz,* January 23, 2004.
90. Salwa Kanaana and Stephanie Nolan, "Bombs Bring Chaos," *Palestine Report,* March 8, 1996.

The ensuing debate among Palestinians concerned not only the strategic rationality of using violence, but also who had the right to make decisions in the name of the nation. For some Hamas members, the bombings indicated that control over the Islamists' strategy did not rest where it should, with the political leadership. Hamas member Ghazi Hamad explained, "The political wing began to pay the price for military operations it was not aware of and without knowing the objectives behind them."[91] For those not aligned with Hamas, spoiler violence generated larger questions about foreign interference in the Palestinian struggle. A leading Palestinian daily declared, "It is no longer acceptable for these outside organizations to stick their noses into our affairs." It argued that bombings must cease "so we do not remain held captive to decisions made outside Palestine."[92]

In conclusion, interfactional and intrafactional factors shaped both negotiating and spoiling during the Oslo peace process. As in the 1970s, many observers attributed violence during the 1990s to Palestinian radicals' uncompromising opposition to peace and saw repression as the only recourse. Had policymakers considered how Hamas's behavior also aimed to achieve internal political objectives, however, they might have advocated a different approach. More appropriate might have been a formula for Palestinian power sharing that guaranteed Hamas its organizational survival, granted it space to express itself as a peaceful opposition, and mollified rather than exacerbated divisions within its ranks.

Conclusion

Edward Newman and Oliver Richmond argue, "It is important to note the difference between the use of spoiling . . . to *shape* a negotiating process and its use to destroy it."[93] Equally important, however, is to note the difference between spoiling to shape a negotiating process and spoiling to shape the balance of power among the forces that make up a nonstate group. This article has explored the latter set of dynamics by crafting a framework for analysis of

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91. Ghazi A. Hamad, "The Relationship between Hamas and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA): The Conflictual Past and the Unknown Future," in Wolfgang Freund, ed., *Palestinian Perspectives,* Vol. 1: *Controversies from the Promised Land* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999), p. 182.
92. Ziad Abdul Fateh, "What Is Hamas Trying To Do?" *Al-Ayyam,* March 2, 1996, reprinted in *Palestine Report,* March 8, 1996.
93. See Edward Newman and Oliver Richmond, "Introduction: Obstacles to Peace Processes: Understanding Spoiling," in Newman and Richmond, eds., *Challenges to Peacebuilding: Managing Spoilers during Conflict Resolution* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2006), p. 18 (emphasis in original).

how negotiating and spoiling result from motives of internal political contestation. It has illustrated two hypotheses. First, internal contestation is most likely to drive conflict behavior in cases where a party to a conflict lacks an institutionalized system of legitimate representation. Second, whether internal pressures lead groups to act as peace makers or peace breakers depends not only on their policy preferences but also on their relative power in their national community.

Most research on conflict resolution relies on different theoretical frameworks for the study of negotiating and the study of spoiling. In contrast, this article uses one framework to show how both negotiating and spoiling are ramifications of a single process of contestation over internal political leadership. It thus challenges conventional interpretations of conflict resolution, which tend to take for granted that those who support or oppose a settlement do so primarily because of their interest in peace itself. In demonstrating the role of multiple, competing struggles, this study applied George Tsebelis's notion of nested games and highlighted how these "games" function uniquely in nonstate and weakly institutionalized settings. In such contexts, actors contest not only the substance of policies but also the very process of collective decisionmaking and the legitimacy of claims to represent the collective.

The internal contestation approach makes a contribution to the literature on "ripeness" for conflict resolution by showing how the same internal pressures that render some leaders ready to make peace can drive their opponents to disrupt it. In addition, it shows how actors' relative power shapes their antagonism toward a peace process, regardless of what Stephen Stedman identifies as their total, limited, or greedy conflict goals. This power balance is relevant not only because it affects the material capabilities that enable actors to pursue their exogenous conflict objectives. It also shapes their assessment of the costs and benefits of violence or peace in the first place. The internal contestation logic demonstrates that leaders of national movements and rebel groups, no less than those of states, are systematically influenced by domestic political competition and public opinion. The policy implication is that sponsors of peace processes should expect spoiler problems unless they take steps to help a nonstate group heal its internal rifts. The more that a nonstate group institutionalizes a system of legitimate representation, the more it will be able to act on the basis of external conflict utility as opposed to divergent internal political utilities.

A comparative analysis of two efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict demonstrates the fruitfulness of the internal contestation approach. When some Palestinian factions indicated their willing-

ness to participate in the Geneva peace conference in 1973, they did so at least partly to outmaneuver Jordan and gain recognition for the PLO's sole, legitimate representation of the Palestinian people. When more radical factions carried out attacks to undermine this diplomatic turn, they did so at least partly to assert their rightful place in national decisionmaking. Twenty years later, when the PLO leadership negotiated the Oslo agreement, it was largely driven by its quest to safeguard its leadership in the face of potential challenges from local PLO activists, the Islamist movement, and the PLO's own institutional decline. When Hamas carried out suicide bombings in defiance of Oslo, it was driven not only by its opposition to Israel but also by its competition with the PLO, its desire to retain influence within Palestinian politics, and its own internal debates. These are merely two of numerous analogous examples in Palestinian history, from the violence and diplomacy characterizing Palestinians' reaction to the Peel partition plan of 1936 to cease-fires in the second intifada after the year 2000.

The internal contestation approach sheds new light on these events as well as on more recent developments. The 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections could have marked an unprecedented advance toward the establishment of a legitimate system of representation in the Palestinian territories. Hamas, Fatah, and other Palestinian groups agreed to integrate into a single institution under a single set of rules. Broad-based participation in free and fair elections validated those rules with a popular mandate. Nevertheless, Palestinian and international actors blocked the emergence of this system when they refused to accept its result: a Hamas electoral victory. Pointing to the history of other militant organizations, some argued that granting Hamas an opportunity to govern would help to temper its opposition to Israel. Taking a contrary stance, the United States and the European Union anounced that they would cut off aid until Hamas recognized Israel, denounced terrorism, and complied with all previous agreements. Israel refused to deal with the PA or transfer its custom revenues. Fatah rejected Hamas's invitation to join the government in what many viewed as an effort to ensure that Hamas failed on its own.

Hamas refused to capitulate. Instead it assumed power during a period of dire economic crisis and was unable to pay the public employees' salaries on which more than a third of the Palestinian workforce depended. At the same time, many Fatah members defied the Hamas government by disregarding its orders and creating havoc in the streets. The leadership struggle between Fatah and Hamas simmered for a year until the Saudi-brokered February 2007 Mecca agreement brought the factions to form a unity government. Nevertheless, Israel and the United States again refused to recognize the gov-

ernment, and the United States instead funded and armed Fatah to defeat the Islamists.[94] The contestation over who had the right to represent the Palestinians continued until Hamas forcibly seized control of the PA in the Gaza Strip in June 2007. Israel and the United States helped Fatah consolidate power in the West Bank, while Israel intensified its blockade of Gaza.

It was against this backdrop of intra-Palestinian competition that the United States relaunched Israeli-Palestinian negotiations at the November 2007 Annapolis summit. The analytical approach in this article shows why, given the intensity of internal Palestinian contestation, it was not surprising that rival parties would take up negotiating or spoiling. In aligning itself with U.S. President George W. Bush's pledge to achieve a peace settlement by the year 2009, the Fatah leadership not only sought to achieve an agreement. It also hoped to establish its right to represent the Palestinian people. In opposing the negotiations, Hamas was contesting that right and asserting its own.

Fatah-PA officials are likely to continue peace talks with Israel because doing so forms the bedrock of their claim to leadership and distinguishes them from their political rivals. The Hamas movement will have incentives to undermine such talks as long as it remains excluded. The internal contestation model explains why Fatah-PA officials may be expected to negotiate even when the prospects for peace with Israel are low and why Hamas is likely to turn to spoiling especially when they are high. The best solution to this dilemma is the adoption of measures that temper internal struggles by encouraging Palestinians to mend their differences. In late 2008, such an opportunity emerged when Egypt invited Palestinian factions to Cairo to negotiate the formation of another national unity government. Egypt proposed that PA President Mahmoud Abbas continue the peace talks, but on the condition that any agreement obtain approval from a PLO restructured to include Hamas and other opposition factions. This proposal wisely recognized the link between institutionalization of a system of legitimate representation of the Palestinians, on the one hand, and success of the peace process, on the other. Hamas postponed the Cairo dialogue at the last minute, blaming Fatah. Fatah, in turn, blamed Hamas.

Apart form inter-Palestinian acrimony, outside parties also contributed to obstructing Palestinian unity. As a leading Israeli analyst commented, "An internal Palestinian reconciliation process does not jibe with Israeli interests."[95]

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94. International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Hamas Coup in Gaza: Fundamental Shift in Palestinian Politics," *Strategic Comments,* Vol. 13, No. 5 (June 2007), pp. 1–2; and David Rose, "The Gaza Bombshell," *Vanity Fair,* Vol. 50, No. 4 (April 2008), pp. 192–197.
95. Amos Harel, "Will Hamas-Israel Truce Come to an End in January?" *Haaretz,* October 19, 2008.

This article suggests the opposite. Given Hamas's past violence and continued refusal to recognize Israel, it is justifiable that some would insist on isolating the movement. Yet experience shows the ineffectiveness of this approach. As President Jimmy Carter pleaded after his April 2008 visit to Hamas leaders, "The present strategy of excluding Hamas . . . is just not working."[96] The cease-fire between Hamas and Israel brokered by Egypt in June 2008 indicated the benefits of an alternative approach. While both sides committed violations, the informal understanding yielded, in the words of Israeli General Security Services Director Yuval Diskin, "a significant drop in Hamas terror activity."[97] The question of whether Hamas would accept peace with Israel is of course uncertain. The alternative, however, is predictable. The International Crisis Group explains, "Without a Hamas-Fatah power-sharing agreement and as long as the Islamists feel marginalized, unable to govern and in an existential struggle for survival, there can be no sustainable diplomacy."[98]

This analysis of the Palestinian case offers insights relevant for other peace processes involving nonstate groups, such as Northern Ireland, Sudan, the Western Sahara, Sri Lanka, and South Africa. It also offers a basis for generating new hypotheses. Researchers can build on this study by further exploring the role of such factors as public opinion and external patrons in shaping the internal politics of peace making and peace breaking. They can also consider how variation in the internal structure of nationalist movements affects their likelihood of negotiating or spoiling. Moreover, they can broaden the scope of analysis by examining the internal political influences simultaneously at play within both antagonists involved in asymmetric conflict and how these interact to favor or undermine the probability of a negotiated settlement. These and other inquiries can contribute to policy-relevant knowledge about how to launch peace processes and protect them until peace takes root.

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96. Karen DeYoung, "Rice: Officials Advised Carter Not to Meet with Hamas," *Washington Post*, April 22, 2008. For a similar argument in other cases, see Lisa Blaydes and Jennifer De Maio, "Spoiling the Peace? Peace Process Exclusivity and Political Violence in North-Central Africa," paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, San Francisco, California, March 26–30, 2008.
97. Quoted in International Crisis Group, "Round Two in Gaza," Middle East Briefing, No. 24 (Brussels: International Crisis Group, September 11, 2008), p. 12.
98. International Crisis Group, "After Mecca: Engaging Hamas," Middle East Report, No. 62 (Brussels: International Crisis Group, February 28, 2007), p. ii.